

What Is Church?

Genesis 28:10-22 - Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran. ¹¹ So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep. ¹² Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder *was* set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

¹³ And behold, the Lord stood above it and said: “I *am* the Lord God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. ¹⁴ Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. ¹⁵ Behold, I *am* with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.”

¹⁶ Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know *it*.” ¹⁷ And he was afraid and said, “How awesome *is* this place! This *is* none other than the house of God, and this *is* the gate of heaven!”

¹⁸ Then Jacob rose early in the morning and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it. ¹⁹ And he called the name of that place ^[b] Bethel; but the name of that city had been Luz previously. ²⁰ Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, ²¹ so that I come back to my father’s house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God. ²² And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God’s house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You.”

Introduction:

Today we are beginning a series where we **re-think church**. We are going to “think” church, but we are also going to “rethink”. Pam and I came back to Cookeville one year ago this week to plant a church. We are now only a few months old as a church family and God is weekly sending us people like you! Now, it’s time for us to “think” church. Since we are planting a new work we need to also “rethink” church because we have an opportunity to create exactly the kind of culture, environment and vision that we desire. So this is a very critical time for us. We need to be very intentional so that we don’t create a monster that we have to kill later.

What is our vision? Who are we? Why plant a church in the Bible belt anyway? What is our mission? Well those are all great questions that we will get to this month, but we must first answer the main question – What is Church?

Ex. – Here’s the church, here’s the steeple, open it up and there is all the people...

What does the Bible say church is?

1. Church is a CONNECTION

Genesis 28:12 - Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder *was* set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

John 1:51 - He then added, "Very truly I tell you, you will see 'heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on' the Son of Man."

Genesis 28:16-17 - Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know *it*." ¹⁷ And he was afraid and said, "How awesome *is* this place! This *is* none other than the house of God, and this *is* the gate of heaven!"

- **Connection with GOD**
- **Connection with PEOPLE**

2. Church is a CONVERSTATION

Exodus 25:22 - And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which *are* on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel.

Three Ways God Wants to Speak to You:

- **CORRECTION**
- **Direction**
- **Inspiration**

3. Church is a COMMITMENT

Genesis 28:20 - Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on,

Genesis 31:13 - I *am* the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar *and* where you made a vow to Me. Now arise, get out of this land, and return to the land of your family.' "

Matthew 6:21 - For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Conclusion:

Genesis 32:28 - And He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but ^[a]Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed."